BHUTAN Fully Supported  
Trek & Wildlife Adventure  
Oct 30 - Nov 13, 2020  
AT# 2045  
Trip rating=Moderate  
https://www.outdoors.org/outdoor-activities/difficulty-ratings

ABOUT THIS TOUR  
This unique tour offers an in-depth visit of the Himalaya’s most unique and lesser visited destination, Bhutan. Sharing its ‘roof of the world’ status with neighboring Tibet and Nepal, Bhutan is an anomaly in the scope of adventure travel. It remains a devoted and peaceful Buddhist Kingdom whereby all tourism is operated by a well-organized Government initiative that fosters direct representation by the Bhutanese themselves. Bhutan is a magical destination and we welcome you to discover it with us in 2020!

IS THIS TOUR FOR ME?  
This tour can be classified as an active tour of Bhutan’s diverse cultural ethnicity and wonderful mountain nature. The trip is rated as a trekking holiday with extended days in remote areas but not exceeding more than 10,000 feet. It is rated more difficult than a day hiking tour so do expect to be hiking every day (with exception of travel days). Staying in tent camps / basic lodgings and utilizing horses for carrying your baggage is part of this adventure. If you’re seeking a glimpse of Himalaya culture and an extraordinary Kingdom of happy citizens than this is a perfect tour for you!

HOTELS, CAMPS, MEALS & COMFORT LEVEL  
Bhutan is expensive and has some of the highest daily visa fees on the planet. For this reason, it receives much tourism investment and pours this capital back into tourism infrastructure. Our hotel standard is generally 3 star throughout and they are located in excellent locations. For our trekking days, our local outfitter supplies dome tents and a porter/cooking team. Meals are simple and nourishing. The food is clean and well prepared and mostly local specialty dishes are served.

Our trip involves travel by modern, private coach and we also have 2 flights included within the country itself. Altitudes are moderate on this journey ranging from 7,9000 feet and at times we’ll hike passes that exceed just over 10,000 feet. October weather is autumn but it’s mild by our standards (65 F) however nights may be in the 30s. This is a great season to trek as weather conditions are in our favor.

TOUR HIGHLIGHTS  
* Diverse landscapes from soaring Himalaya Mountains to rural villages, ancient plantations and temples.  
* Engaging local cultural aspects with an emerging music, art and culinary scene.  
* A real life insight into the ‘happiest culture’ on the planet and a chance to pick up some tips in this department!
* Sensible trekking distances to allow you to experience the landscapes and local cultures and to sleep under one of the most incredible star shows on the planet!
* An opportunity to give back to the Developing World communities and to spread a message of peace and unity.
* Bring along any gear you no longer use/need to donate to the local community.

**Detailed Itinerary:**

* Day 1 October 30, 2020 would be your travel day from USA / a pre-activity night in Paro is already reserved (Day 2 below) and the guided tour starts on that day. Note this itinerary is subject to minor changes pending final number of participants and subsequent permits for our group number from the Government of Bhutan.

**Day 2- Oct 31, 2020 ARRIVAL TO PARO (7,200 ft)**
Arrival at Paro International Airport. International flights are not included and please organize your flights to Paro City (PBH airport code). Druk Airlines is Bhutan’s national carrier and they can be booked online. Today is simply rest and recovery in Paro before the tour begins. You will meet your guiding and driver team. 3 Star hotel *(lunch and dinner included)*

**Day 3- Nov 1, 2020 PARO EXPLORATION DAY (7,200 ft)**
As this is the first excursion day of the tour, we will have light walking exploration of the city and region but come back to Paro at the end of the trip to explore the valley and famous temples. *Same Hotel in Paro. All meals included.*

**Day 3- Nov 2, 2020 BUMTHANG (9,185 ft) to TRONGSA (7,215 ft)**
Short internal flight (35 min) to Bumthang. *Bumthang* directly translates as "beautiful field" – *thang* means field or flat place, and *bum* is said to be an abbreviation of either *bumpa* (a vessel for holy water, thus describing the shape and nature of the valley), or simply *bum* ("girl," indicating this is the valley of beautiful girls). The name is said to have arisen after construction of *Jambay Lhakhang* Temple. After our flight, we’ll drive 2 hours to Trongsa where we stay 1 night before setting off for 3 nights on our trek. Hotel - *Rural Standard Government operated. All meals included.*

**Day 4, 5, 6, 7- Nov 3 to 6, 2020 TRONGSA 4 DAY MOUNTAIN TREK**
Today we begin a 4-day trek that is supported by guides, horse porters and tent camps. This is a wonderful Bhutanese experience and the trails and views throughout the days are spectacular! Specific daily hiking distances and elevation changes consist of:

**Day 4**
TREK TRONGSA (7,215 ft) TO KASIPHEY (8,800 ft)
Starting elevation: 7,200’ at Trongsa Elevation gain: 1,600’
Ending elevation: 8,800’ at Kasiphey Monastery
Elevation loss: 1,200’ Time: 5-6 hours Distance: ~ 9 miles
After breakfast this morning we start our trek. Here we’ll meet our horsemen and camp staff. Our gear will be loaded onto the pack animals and we’ll embark on the first stage of our trek.
Today’s hike involves a long, steep climb. Take it slow and easy, as a steady pace will help you get into a rhythm and will make the climb more manageable. As we gain elevation, we have views of the valley interspersed with hiking in dense oak forests. The trail takes us over the Dhemlay La Pass at 10,000 ft. There is a great view of the entire Nuchutey area from the pass. Our first night’s camp is just below the beautiful Kasiphey Monastery, built in 2000 by Gangtey Tulku Rimpoche and housing over 50 monks who are studying and practicing Buddhism here.

**Day 5**
TREK KASIPHEY (8,800 ft) TO DRONGTHANG (8,600 ft)
Starting elevation: 8,800’ at Kasiphey camp Elevation gain: ~1000’
Elevation loss: ~1200’ Ending elevation: 8,600’
Time: 4-5 hours Distance: ~ 9 miles
Today’s hike begins with a descent to the river with stunning views of terraced fields and ancient farm houses along the way. We hike along the Mangdu Chu River for about an hour. The last hour or so we take a winding uphill trail past an old chorten to the village of Dronthang, our home for the next two nights. After settling in, we can explore the village, and enjoy a chat with the village head man.

**Day 6**
TREK DRONGTHANG TO BEMJI
Starting elevation: 8,600’ at Drongthang  Elevation gain: 0’
Ending elevation:  8,300’ at Bemji  Elevation loss: 300’
Distance: ~ 10 miles  Time: 4-5 hours
This morning’s hike is a gentle downhill to the Mangdu Chu River.  Along the way we pass through several small hamlets and terraced fields overlooking the river and its valley. After lunch at a scenic overlook, we gradually make our way up to the village of Bemji with its lovely manor house. Here we camp in the schoolyard. If we're lucky, some school children will visit our camp and regale us with their pretty voices and traditional songs.

**Day 7**

**TREK BEMJI TO BJIZAM (drive) TO TRONGSA**

Starting elevation: 8,300’ at Bemji  Elevation gain: 0’
Ending elevation:  7,200’ at Bjizam  Elevation loss: 1,100’
Distance: ~ 9 miles  Time: 4-5 hours

Those who want can attend the morning assembly at the school and listen to the students sing the Bhutan national anthem (a cappella) and have a brief meditation before beginning their day. We can also visit them in their classrooms briefly before we head out on the trail. On this morning’s hike, we first descend to the river, cross to the opposite bank and the opposite side of the valley. Rounding the mountain side, we drop into the valley and the village of Bjizam. Here our vehicles await us and after enjoying a nice picnic lunch, we drive to TRONGSA for a night back in a rural hotel.

Note – during our 3 tent nights - accommodation is in dome mountain tents with bed foams / all meals are provided.

**Day 8- Nov 7, 2020 PANBANG (South Bhutan)**

Private bus transfer from Trongsa to Panbang (full day bus shuttle).  This is a long cross-Bhutan transfer that offers outstanding beauty and diversity as we travel south to near the border of India. Expect a change in temperature and climate as we near the jungle environments of the Royal Manus National Park.  Hotel Standard Government operated.  All meals included.

**Day 9,10,11- Nov 8 to 10, 2020  TREK ROYAL MANUS NATIONAL PARK**

The Royal Manus National Park is Bhutan’s oldest national park, and the Royal government considers it the "conservation showpiece of the Kingdom" and a “genetic depository” for valuable plants & wildlife. It has an area of 1,057 square kilometres (408 sq mi) and it is connected via "biological corridors" to Phibsboo Wildlife Sanctuary, Jigme Singye Wangchuck National Park, Thrumshingla National Park, and Khaling Wildlife Sanctuary. Royal Manas also directly abuts the World Heritage Site Manas National Park in Assam, India, to the south. The Park is home to Bengal tigers, elephants, gaur (Bos gaurus), as well as rarer golden langur, pygmy hog, hispid hare and Ganges river dolphin. It is also the only Bhutanese park inhabited by the one-horned rhinoceros and wild water buffalo. Hundreds of species of birds — including four species of hornbills — rufous-necked, wreathed, pied and great Indian — also live in the vast park.

Through our local government sanctioned tour operator – our group has a special permit to visit, hike and explore areas of this wonderful National Park.  Specific details of the hiking distances, elevation changes and terrain will be announced shortly (this depends on our final number of participants). During our park-based hikes, we’ll also engage in other activities with local rangers such as a wildlife safari, boat excursion, etc. During our trekking days (3 nights), we’ll be utilizing a tent camp system or simple lodge similar to our previous trek.  All meals are included.

**Day 12- Nov 11, 2020 GELEPHU (725 ft)**

Upon completing our trek and activities in the National Park, we drive to south Bhutan’s market town of Gelephu. With a population of 10,000, Gelephu benefits greatly from trade with India as it’s a border town. Today we’ll be taking a short flight direct from Gelephu to Paro.  Same hotel as first 2 nights of tour.  All meals included.
Day 13- Nov 12, 2020  PARO & THE TIGER’S NEST HIKE (10,240 ft)
Today after a scenic 1 hour drive, we hike to the famous Tiger’s Nest – properly known as the Temple of Taktsang Lhakhang. The excursion will take about 4 hours (1700 feet elevation gain) and lunch will be served at the cafeteria en route. This magical monastery clings to a granite cliff above the valley flow. Your guide will share with you the legends that are associated with the place. After the hike, we can perhaps enjoy a traditional Bhutanese hot stone bath before our farewell dinner. Same hotel as last night in Paro. All meals included.

Day 14- Nov 13, 2020  DEPARTURE DAY
This morning we bid farewell to friendly Bhutan and you will be transferred to the airport. Breakfast only included.

What the trip cost INCLUDES:
- 13 nights accommodation twin or double share (SINGLE room options very limited in hotels and complicated in tent camps)
- All meals as indicated on itinerary (basically all meals except for any nights/days outside of this itinerary)
- Private taxi and/or small bus transfers for airport arrivals and departures
- Private charter bus service and all transfers as per itinerary
- 2 x internal flights / baggage limited 44 pounds (checked) and 1 carry on piece
- Guided excursions with local guides and entrance fees as per itinerary
- Entrance fees: included for various small museums and temples where provided during visits.
- National Park entrance fees where indicated on itinerary
- Tips for all GUIDES, drivers & provided meals (housekeeping tips are separate)
- Daily VISA fees for our stay in Bhutan – THIS INCLUDES THE BHUTANESE ENTRANCE VISA
- Regional taxes, permits, tourism taxes and associated agency fees
- Tips for sherpas, charter driver, daily guide
- AMC Overhead fee
- Medical Evacuation Insurance

What’s Not Included
- International flights (to/from Bhutan)
- Departure taxes (if applicable but at this time no indication of this tax).
- Additional nights of stay in Bhutan (and visas, meals, etc) apart from the 13 included nights
- Baggage handling in hotels and on/off transfer coaches, etc. (ie you will need to be able to handle your own luggage to/from hotel rooms and buses etc when not trekking)
- Travel insurance (It is compulsory to have personal travel insurance that covers medical costs, lost baggage and cancellation)
- Meals (where not listed as included in the itinerary)
- All beverages as they are not included with meals
- Sleeping bags for tent camp (we recommend you bring your own)
- Tips for housekeeping staff, personal services
- Optional additional tours or activities during free choice time
- Other transfers and/or private shuttles and taxis

Additional Nights pre/post Tour
If you choose to arrive earlier than the tour start date, or stay longer at the end, we will submit your rooming request to our local Bhutanese tour operator. If you wish to arrive one day earlier to acclimatize, this expense is outside of the tour price and
must be covered by you. On the other hand, we have already included a pre-tour arrival night in this itinerary. The Bhutan Agency set room rate for additional nights (includes your visa, meals, airport transfer and hotel room), is $325.

Please be aware that, in accordance with AMC policy, you are subsidizing the leaders' costs. Beyond this, the leaders are not allowed to realize any profit from this excursion. The trip price also includes an AMC overhead fee to cover the administrative expenses of offering Adventure Travel excursions. The trip fee includes emergency medical and evacuation insurance coverage, which is required by the AMC. It does not include insurance for travel delay, interruption, trip cancellation, or loss of baggage. If these possibilities concern you, individual travel insurance is recommended. More information about included emergency medical and evacuation insurance, as well as about optional and recommended travel insurance, will be provided to participants in their formal acceptance letters.

**TRIP COSTS:**

5 to 13 participants: $6555 per person

14 to 16 participants: $6295 per person

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**Pre Departure Information**

**VISA & PASSPORT**

Please ensure your passport is valid and it’s always beneficial to have at least 6 months remaining before expiry. Our Bhutan excursion price includes the VISA for entrance and daily stay. This is carried out after we finalize your place on the tour and we submit a copy of your valid passport to our agent in Bhutan. It is very well organized and managed internally within Bhutan.

**VACCINATIONS & TRAVEL HEALTH**

Speak to your Physician or a travel health specialist about inoculations for this region. As our zone of travel is in the developing world, the World Health Organization recommends a standard set of vaccines that include and are not restricted to: Hepatitis, Typhoid, Yellow Fever, Tetanus and perhaps prophylactics for Malaria in rural, low elevation areas like the Royal Manus National Park. Bottled water is recommended and widely available. Food preparation and quality on our tour is of a very high standard.

**DANGERS & ANNOYANCES**

The areas chosen for this tour are within the recommended safe zones by the US and British State Advisory Departments. Your tour operator keeps a close watch on these advisories for all destinations we operate in. Common sense when travelling in built-up, urban areas is always advised. Using ATMs and carrying large sums of money or valuables must always be done so with caution. Avoid demonstrations, crowds and protests and never venture out alone during the evenings unless you are advised otherwise.

**MONEY ISSUES**

The Bhutanese currency is the ngultrum, which is pegged to the Indian rupee and thus trades at par with that currency. There are no coins, and you can expect to be handed wads of cash. The smallest note is for 1-ngultrum, and it's worth only about $0.014 USD. As of February 2019, USD1 is equivalent to about 71 (BTN) Ngultrum if you are using USD50 or USD100 notes. Please take note that USD50 and USD100 notes are given a better exchange rate than USD20 notes or lesser. The smaller USD notes fetch about 5% less.

If you plan to bring $100 U.S. notes be aware that the banks in Bhutan do not accept notes printed in 1996 due to counterfeiting that took place in that year. **So go through your notes carefully**—also, no tears, ink marks, staple holes etc. Bhutan is a cash economy! Visa and Mastercard are not accepted at smaller shops, but bigger shops and some hotels
accept Mastercard. There is an American Express office in the capital, and Amex is accepted in a few rare instances. More important, an Amex office means you can get your travellers’ checks replaced if necessary – if they’re even accepted at all!

If you bring in cash, your best option is to change dollars or whatever you bring into ngultrums at the airport. The exchange rate is the same as in the banks in town. Keep in mind that banks get much harder to find outside the capital. You can also change your money at the hotels in Thimphu, but the rate is not as good. For a stay of two weeks 100-150$ will cover your expenses, inclusive drinks with meals, and some souvenirs. However, this will certainly not be enough to cover tips.

WEATHER & CLIMATE
Fall (October) is agreeable to say the least. It is a great time to tour the central & south regions and the trekking heights of 7-10,000 feet are still relatively mild. Normally it is the beginning of the dry season (mid October onwards), and here’s 25 % of showers but nothing as severe as the summer monsoon season.

LANGUAGE (official):
Bhutan = Dzongkha
*English is spoken in Tour Districts, hotels, etc on this tour.

INTERNAL TRAVEL – WHAT TO EXPECT
Our transfers by private coach are in modern, comfortable tour class buses with air conditioning and licensed drivers. In Bhutan, we have some (6-8 hour) bus journeys which take some time due to the terrain (Himalaya Passes) and poor infrastructure around built up areas – this is what makes adventure touring interesting! Our routes follow the principal road networks of the region with larger towns and services available if need be. We have two internal flights (1 way) that are approximately 1 hour in duration.

INTERNET AND CELL PHONE CONNECTIVITY
There is internet and cell phone coverage in most of Bhutan’s larger centers (Paro) and in the Government classified hotels there is ‘normally’ Wifi for free but the quality can be variable – especially in the age of everyone posting photos as this eats up the bandwidth. Alternatively, many travellers now purchase a Bhutan Sim Card for use (both cell phone and data), during their stay.

GETTING TO AND FROM BHUTAN
Paro is the city in Bhutan where the International Airport is located. The airport code is (PBH). You can fly to and from Paro to any destination that Bhutan’s airline Druk Air flies to. These include: Bangkok, Bagdogra, Delhi, Dhaka, Guwahati, Kolkata, Kathmandu, Mumbai and Singapore. Our in country Bhutanese agency can assist you with the Druk Air reservation if you so choose.

If you choose to fly via India, it’s possible that Indian visas are required. However they have different rules for transit passengers, so check with the Indian Embassy in your country before booking! Indian Visa rules keep changing. The latest we heard was that transit passengers may also need visas if staying at the airport for certain number of hours.

Leaders’ expectations of participants:
When you participate in this activity, you should be in proper condition for the challenges outlined in this prospectus and equipped with the appropriate gear as stated. You should always be aware of the risks involved and conduct yourself accordingly. You are ultimately responsible for your own safety. Prior to your acceptance as a participant in this trip, you will be asked to discuss your capabilities and experience with us. We may also request references to confirm your fitness level and suitability for participating in trip activities.

This trip is designed so that everyone may experience our adventure in Bhutan through shared participation in activities and tasks in an organized group environment. AMC travelers are known for their cooperative efforts, and expectations are that all participants will be considerate of others sharing this AMC Adventure Travel experience.

It may happen on any trip that a trip member is or becomes unable to participate in one or more of the planned activities. Leaders in their sole judgment have the right and obligation to refuse participation in any activity to any group member for reasons of safety, whether it will be of the group or of the individual. Illness, injury or lack of proper gear or fitness for a particular activity are examples of some conditions that might result in a participant’s being unable to perform one or more activity. Leaders may try to find a substitute activity for the trip member, but this may not always be possible.

**Tying trip to AMC mission:**

AMC Adventure Travel trips are run in a manner supportive of and consistent with the conservation, recreational and educational principles and mission of the Club. Trip leaders encourage participant conduct consistent with Leave No Trace environmental and conservation principles and local regulations.

**Cancellation Policy:**

The AMC Adventure Travel cancellation policy is based on the fact that your cancellation may not raise the cost to the other participants or to the leaders. The published minimum penalty schedule is $200 before Jan 1, 2020, and $350 from Jan 1, 2020 onwards. If actual costs (expenses already incurred on your behalf and any unavoidable future expenses that will be incurred as a result of your registration and cancellation) are higher, they will be assessed instead, unless they can be applied toward another acceptable participant. Should the leaders be able to replace you, you may be charged a reduced or zero penalty. This will generally not be determined until after the trip. Please refer to insurance information in the section titled “What Trip Price Includes.”

**How air travel is to be handled:**

While participant international airfare is not included in the trip price, leaders may assist participants in making suitable reservations. Participants will be told when and where they must join the group for the official start of the trip’s planned activities. Once your air tickets are purchased they are your responsibility – do not make any non-refundable travel plans until told to do so by the leaders. The leaders will send out a document with a list of suggested flights from your home airport which will work to get you to Paro in time for the start of the trip.

The price for this excursion is based on quotes or estimates obtained at the time the trip was submitted to the Adventure Travel Committee for approval (July 2019). The final price of the trip will be adjusted in accordance with the best final arrangements we can make. If the trip’s financial position is strong enough at the start, the leaders may make partial refunds during the trip, in the form of payments toward some meals and/or free time activities which would otherwise not be included. Any savings we achieve, as well as any cost increases we incur, will be shared by trip participants. Our cost estimates are conservative, and so a refund is considerably more likely than a price increase. All Adventure Travel trips are run on a non-profit basis and refunds, if any, are issued after the trip's financial accounting is complete.

**Conditioning and activity/fitness level:**

Participants should be comfortable hiking up to 4 to 5 hours and 10 miles per day with elevation gain of up to 1700 feet (if you opt to do the hike up to Tiger’s Nest). Participants should have recent previous experience hiking on rolling/hilly/rocky/mountainous terrain.

**Application process or how to apply:**

To apply, you must complete and submit the Participant Application, Confidential Health Questionnaire, and Acknowledgement and Assumption of Risk and Release form, enclosing a registration deposit of $1000. You will be considered qualified for the
trip when the leaders have determined by conversation with you that you and the trip seem to be a good match. You will be formally accepted, and your check will be deposited. Deposit checks from wait-listed applicants will not be cashed until we offer them a spot on the trip AND they accept.

**Payment Schedule:**

$3000 payment to be sent by April 1, 2020
Balance of trip to be sent by July 1, 2020

Please make payments by check payable to the “Appalachian Mountain Club” and mail to:

Ginette Beaudoin
66 Graham Street
Biddeford, ME
04005

**Safety:**

As participant safety is a high priority for all AMC-sponsored events, procedures and policies have been developed to attempt to limit participant risk. Participants are expected to work with volunteer leaders to reduce risks and make the experience successful for all. Participants should be aware that there are risks associated with outdoor adventure activities, including but not limited to adverse weather and environmental conditions, remote locations of our trips and camps, and transportation in vehicles, on foot, or on a bike. When you apply for acceptance onto a trip, please carefully read and sign the Adventure Travel Acknowledgement and Assumption of Risks and Release and Indemnity Agreement and call if you have any questions.

**Risks of trip activities:**

Participants should be adequately prepared for cold and hot weather hazards such as wind chill, hypothermia, dehydration, rain, sun exposure and insect bites by ensuring they have sun protection, personal first aid kit, bug repellant and extra layers in their day pack during each day’s activities.

**YOUR VOLUNTEER LEADER:**

**LEADER: ANNA PANSZCZYK**

Anna is a Boston Chapter INTRO (AMC) Leader. Anna has co lead AMC Adventure Travel trips to New Zealand, Australia, Dolomites – Italy, Austria, Azores, Yosemite National Park, Minnesota, Peru, Easter Island, Australia, New Zealand, and Morocco. Anna leads hiking trips in the White Mountains and most recently led an excursion to Waterville Valley and Craftsbury Vermont for snowshoeing and cross country hiking. She has also co led the Claybrook ski trip on previous years. During the summer of 2014, she and the trip leader backpacked the Haute Route from Chamonix France to Zermatt Switzerland as well as Kepler Track in New Zealand. This is in addition to trips that she takes to all corners of the world! Anna has completed SOLO Advanced Wilderness First Aid course as well as CPR training.

ADDRESS:           22 Alfred Rd, Arlington, MA 02474
PHONE:       781-648-2492;
EMAIL:  annatp12@gmail.com

**Gear/Packing list:**

You will be required to provide your own daypack, personal first aid kit, weather proof outerwear, hiking poles, as well as broken in hiking boots.

**Clothing:**

Polypro tops (long and short sleeve) and bottoms
Fleece top
Soft Shell or similar jacket and pants
Raingear, top and bottom, Gore Tex or similar; not vinyl
Wool or fleece hat
Waterproof mittens/gloves
Sock liners
Hand warmers
Slippers
Casual wear for lodge and sleeping
Wool socks and footwear appropriate for Apres hiking

**Gear:**
- Hiking poles and good hiking boots
- Sun Screen, sun glasses
- Gaiters, warm hat or headband
- Daypack, water bottles, thermos
- Camera with extra battery and memory card
- Headlamp and extra batteries
- Sleeping bag +/- liner

**Personal:**
- Prescription and OTC personal medications
- Personal first Aid kit
- Contact lens supplies
- Toiletries such as toothpaste, toothbrush, shampoo, conditioner, etc
- Plastic bags, thick ones and large enough to keep things dry inside your daypack
- Alarm clock or just use the one on your smart phone

**ELECTRICITY**
In Bhutan, they use 220-240 VOLTS and the plug shapes are as follows: